



GWI United Nations Representative Advocacy Report

2023 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

GWI advocacy goals

- 100% of United Nations Member States commit to policy, legislation, budget and infrastructure to facilitate transition of girls from primary to secondary school and ensure gender parity and gender equality throughout secondary education by 2030.
- By 2030 100% of United Nations low-income Member States have increased access to tertiary education for girls and women by 50%.
- 100% of United Nations Member States commit to and implement policies for continuing education to empower women throughout the life course, within the formal and informal economies.
- Influence the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.
- All 17 SDGs will include girls' education targets.

Please bear in mind these five overarching, long-term goals during any United Nations intervention that you make on behalf of GWI. Any intervention should push these five goals further.

NB: *Although these goals represent GWI's mission, UN Reps are also invited to promote GWI key messages on areas where especially relevant e.g., women in STEM, securing investment in women teachers, addressing barriers to girls' education such as child marriage.*

GWI United Nations Representative name: Maryella Hannum

United Nation Duty Station represented: UN Headquarters/NY

Meeting attended: 2023 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), UN Headquarters, NY, 10-19 July; held annually under the auspices of ECOSOC

Theme: *Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels*

In-Depth Review of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 6 Clean Water and Sanitation, 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, and 17 Partnerships for the Goals

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): The follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages all member states, developed and undeveloped, to conduct regular reviews of national progress in reaching the goals as part of the HLPF. The reviews serve as a



mechanism for reporting on implementation status, successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Overall, VNRs serve to improve actions, and accelerate progress in achieving all 17 of the interlinked goals. VNR countries submit comprehensive written reports that are made available in the VNR database. The process of reporting summarizes key findings on national commitments and actions for sustainable development, and aims to strengthen policies and institutions of governments.

At the 2023 HLPF, a total of 38 countries presented VNRs along with the European Union (EU) as a first supranational review. In addition to the EU, one Member State (MS) presented for the first time, 36 countries presented for the second time and one presented for a third time on their status and findings.

The 2023 HLPF at the halfway point: As a mid-term review, the HLPF also served as preparation for the 2023 SDG Summit scheduled to be held 18-19 September, 2023. As part of the 2030 Agenda, an SDG Summit takes place every 4 years under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. Reported VNR information helps to identify how countries aim to close gaps in reaching the goals by 2030, and serves as important preparation for the SDG Summit in September.

Ministerial Segment: Took place on 17-20 July on the theme of *Building momentum towards the 2023 SDG Summit: Transformation for accelerating implementation of the SDGs*.

Other Events and Activities: The HLPF session included Side Events, Special Events and Exhibitions.

What GWI policy resolutions does the session relate to?

GWI Policy Resolution 8/2019 – Sustainable Development Goals (and all listed resolutions taken by GWI throughout the years that link to the SDGs as illustrated in the Resolution 8/2019 infographic).

<https://graduatewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Policy-paper-Resolution-8-SDGs.pdf>

Which of the Sustainable Development Goals were covered? What was the relation?

All 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were included as part of the annual review of the 2023 HLPF. The session had a special emphasis on the status of commitments and accelerating actions at the crucial halfway point, with a focus on the reality that only 12% of the SDG targets are on-track, and some targets are regressing below the 2015 level baseline. The 2023 HLPF served as a precursor to and as a planning session for the upcoming SDG Summit, 18-19 September, 2023. In this regard, the 2023 HLPF served as a universal call to action with speakers emphasizing the need for critical actions to reach the goals, and for solid plans to accelerate actions in advance of the upcoming Summit. Many status updates confirmed the startling realities reported in the UN SG's Progress Report.



What United Nations treaties/conventions/resolutions were addressed?

UN Resolution A/RES/70/1 – Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

https://www.un.org/ohrlls/sites/www.un.org.ohrlls/files/2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development_web.pdf

UN Secretary General's (UN SG's) 2023 Progress Report

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF361a019zA>

UN Resolution A/RES/67/290 – Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/496/00/PDF/N1249600.pdf?OpenElement>

Intervention by GWI rep:

Attended multiple sessions in person during the 2023 HLPF relating to the work and mission of GWI including formal program sessions, side events, education and academic sessions, and special informative sessions hosted Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) including those by the NGO Major Group, Women's Major Group and the Education and Academic Stakeholders Group. Met with various stakeholders including state representatives, civil society representatives, representatives of UN agencies, and academic representatives regarding the status and achievement of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Advocated on behalf of GWI as to the critical roles gender equality and access to lifelong education play at the center of sustainable development, emphasizing a systemic approach to priorities and policies, recognizing that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and will significantly push progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda and all 17 SDGs.

Overview:

The 2023 HLPF was the first fully resumed in-person forum since 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the SG's 2023 Progress Report, many of the SDGs are moderately to severely off track. Five major recommendations are put forth in the report to rescue the SDGs and accelerate implementation between now and 2030, and for consideration by Member States (MS) in advance of the SDG Summit in September 2023.



Participants at the HLPF discussed effective recovery measures to address impacts of COVID-19 on the SDGs and explored actions and policy considerations to achieve full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the forum conducted an in-depth review of the five SDGs listed above, held a ministerial segment with a general debate in preparation for the SDG Summit, and a total of 39 VNRs were presented.

Discussions:

Interlinkages among the SDGs were stressed, data gaps and limited finance are major obstacles and persistent challenges to achieving the goals. Progress and regressions due to COVID-19 were discussion points throughout the conference. Progress reporting included innovative strategies, policies and partnerships that have been adopted to overcome specific challenges. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) provided insights to both challenges and progress. Honest reviews on gaps were called for as well as transformative action going forward from the halfway point.

Despite the reality of overcoming multiple world crises, which include the pandemic, conflicts and war, food insecurity, poverty, natural and climate-related disasters, panelists from various sessions called for advancing policies that leave no one behind, accessible timely and disaggregated data, putting children and young people at the heart of SDG efforts, leveraging international partnerships, addressing refugees, the displaced, and other highly vulnerable groups, and for MS to consider SDG data and infrastructure as an investment and not as a burden.

Access to financing is a critical issue for countries to accelerate progress and achieve sustainable development. Specific concerns were discussed and presented including funding and financing crisis response and investing in the SDGs. Financing discussions included topics on: the need to considerably increase and upscale private capital; debt cancellation; and financing for climate solutions via mechanisms that are not debt generating. There is a great need for debt relief for developing countries, and special funding in order for countries to move forward on achieving the SDGs.

On the topic of Science, Technology & Innovation, discussion focused on the role of connectivity, the digital divide, and utilization of AI in helping developing countries to push progress forward in achieving the SDGs.

Data is essential for progress on the SDGs. Many countries struggle to produce relevant SDG data. Significant investment is required in data gathering, including data governance and the analytical capacity to ensure reliable data is available to drive transformational change. Investment and training in technologies is key in driving a digital transformation.

There was a call for acting at the local level in order to achieve the SDGs. Local leaders need more administrative powers from governments to move progress forward. Governments were called on to translate the 2030 Agenda and SDGs into language that address local needs and day-to-day problems,



empower youth to engage and drive community change on the ground, and to involve populations not previously reached in realizing the SDGs, using a whole of society approach, and to create finance channels to the local level. Another aspect was to create a greater role for Voluntary Local Reports at the HLPF (in addition to the VNRs). Local action is needed to ensure delivering on the promise to leave no one behind.

A whole of society approach is needed to achieve the SDGs, which includes civil society, the private sector and local governments, via multi-stakeholder partnerships. Although civil society space at the UN is largely pushed back since the pandemic and is of great concern by Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS), it is recognized that CSOs are necessary for MS to accelerate and achieve SDGs. MGoS emphasize the importance of CSO on the ground for SDG implementation. Civil Society partnerships are a critical part of ensuring SDG implementation gets back on track. Acting at the local level is critical. Partnerships at national, international, and regional levels are crucial.

UNmute Civil Society is a coalition of NGOs and MS that call for inclusive and meaningful civil society participation at the UN. A side event for CSO engagement was held and hosted by Denmark & Costa Rica (champions for CSO engagement). CSOs questioned how to get a seat at the table when NGOs could not even get into the UN building or, once inside, access to the HLPF sessions. The session was held at the Ford Foundation. In addition to discussing the need to amplify voices of CSO, the session kicked off the creation of a manual to break down barriers to civil society engagement as the first step towards turning ideas into action. Inputs were elicited from participants at the session for a future manual for diplomats. A call for a Civil Society Envoy at the UN was previously made.

In agreement with highlights in the SG's Progress Report on lack of progress in education and gender equality, "without additional measures, only one in six countries will achieve the universal secondary school completion target by 2030, an estimated 84 million children and young people will still be out of school, and approximately 300 million students will lack the basic numeracy and literacy skills necessary for success in life. To deliver on SDG 4, education financing must become a national investment priority. Measures such as making education free and compulsory, increasing the number of teachers, improving basic school infrastructure and embracing digital transformation are essential."

And, as previously reported on Gender Equality, "at the current rate, it will take an estimated 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to close gaps in legal protections and remove discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments. Political leadership, investments and comprehensive policy reforms are needed to dismantle systemic barriers to achieving SDG 5." Gender equality and education are cross-cutting objectives and must be a key focus on national policies, budgets and institutions going forward.



Calls for digital transformation, financial transformation and transition that results in adequate financing and resources, relevant and accurate disaggregated data, a whole of society approach, are all necessary to accelerate action to meet the 2030 Agenda. According to the HLPF Summary by the President of ECOSOC, “the SDG Summit must be met with clear plans and pledges to strengthen action through ambitious national interventions to reduce poverty and inequality, alongside clear policies, investment plans and partnerships to drive progress across major SDG transitions. An SDG Stimulus of \$500 billion per year is needed for investments in sustainable development and climate financing for countries in need. This can be achieved with sufficient political will.”

A Political Declaration adopted at the SDG Summit will be telling in moving forward and addressing the crucial issues discussed at the 2023 HLPF, including the critical cross-cutting issues of SDG 4 & 5. The Political Declaration will demonstrate MS commitment to significantly address the key challenges and accelerate action towards reaching the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Attendance is planned for the SDG Action Weekend of 16-17, September.

Submitted by:

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